

# Latvian experience in bridging the gaps between science and policy, industry, society

Association of  
Latvian Young Scientists



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## Introduction

Latvians joke that there are two separate languages: one of scientists and one of entrepreneurs. We, members of Association of Latvian Young Scientists (ALYS), have discovered a third one: the one of policy-makers, and see ourselves as translators between these parties. In 12 years ALYS has become the opinion leader in Latvia, and currently has around 150 active members. We don't only represent young researchers, but also work on science policy, communication, commercialization, and provide networking and collaboration opportunities. Here we share our experience on improving state legislation, solving problems of entrepreneurs, and communicating with society.

## PostDoc program

There is often a disconnect between policy-makers and the scientific community, because one side mostly sees the administrative work, while the other thinks about their theories and experiments. One of our biggest successes is a grant program for early career researchers – the PostDoc program. It was envisioned by ALYS and the legislation was developed in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science and State Education Development Agency. PostDoc Latvia program:

- Is comparable to Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellowships, but with higher accept rate;
- Allows PhD holders to start their independent research carriers;
- Is open to foreign applicants.

The program is developed continuously. After each call ends, we organize discussions about the program's pros and cons, so next call will include:

- Simpler administrative part;
- Updated definition of a post-doc;
- Improved online submission system.



Fig. 1. Seminar after the first call of PostDoc program.

## Working groups

Best results can be achieved by knowledgeable and motivated people. To focus our efforts we created three different working groups within ALYS. Communication and commercialization group:

- Promotes the commercialization of research results;
- Helps researchers to commercialize their results.

Science and higher education policy group:

- Cooperates with our partners in legislation development;
- Lobbies beneficial science policy changes;
- Participates in different government committees.
- Connects companies with scientists.

Projects group works with:

- Fundraising;
- Social outreach.

## Social outreach

People often think of a scientist as a person in a white coat sitting in a lab pouring different liquids between glass tubes. So, to change this, we started:

- Started a lecture course on writing for students, in cooperation with the National Library of Latvia;
- Has talked about science and career in it with schoolchildren and students;
- Publishes a magazine "Science Messenger" about latest developments in science;
- Promotes science on TV, radio, social media, and in magazines.



Fig. 2. Lecture about research for students.

## Networking activities

To increase collaboration between fields and institutions, we try to bring scientists together in:

- Smithy of ideas – a weekend-long event, in which scientists from Latvia, Lithuania, and Belorussia present their research and discuss possible collaboration;
- Annual summer camp – where we bring together academia and industry;
- Science brunches – to discuss the latest news in their fields in an informal atmosphere;
- Tours in laboratories, institutes, and enterprises;

Additionally, all board meetings are open to members and guests.



Fig. 3. On tour at the Solid State Physics Institute.

## Annual summer camp

Annual summer camp is ALYS main informal event, where we bring together members of academia and industry. It is a weekend-long networking opportunity for researchers, in which:

- Different companies present challenges, and scientists discuss possible solutions;
- Researchers learn of current funding opportunities;
- Scientists and entrepreneurs draft common research proposals;
- People can talk to each other in an informal setting and find common interests.



Fig. 4. Inter-session discussion at ALYS summer camp.



Fig. 5. ALYS summer camp.

## Further actions

Our cooperation with current partners has been successful, but we need to improve it further. Our next steps are:

- Reshaping of State Research Programs;
- Further development of the PostDoc program;
- Expanding Smithy of Ideas to all three Baltic states.

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## Our partners

